



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
April 19, 2007

*Office of the United States Attorney  
District of Arizona*

For Information Contact Public Affairs  
WYN HORNBUCKLE  
Telephone: (602) 514-7625  
Cell: (602) 525-2681

## **TUCSON MAN SENTENCED FOR OPERATING AIRPLANE WITHOUT AN AIRMAN'S CERTIFICATE**

TUCSON – Ernesto Plaza Hernandez, Jr., 44, of Tucson, was sentenced here today to five years probation, with a number of conditions, as well as a \$5,000 fine, by U.S. District Judge Frank R. Zapata. Hernandez had pleaded guilty to charges of Piloting an Aircraft Without a Valid Pilot Certificate.

The investigation showed that on or about January 31, 2000, Hernandez was convicted upon his plea of guilty to Possession of Marijuana with Intent to Distribute, in violation of Oklahoma statute, 63 O.S. 2-401(B)(2), and was sentenced to five years incarceration, with all but the first six months suspended. The charges stemmed from Hernandez' arrest on September 9, 1999, at an airfield in Ponca City, OK, in a Cessna aircraft with approximately 60 lbs. of marijuana. As a result, Hernandez' airman's certificate was revoked for life on or about November 29, 2001, by the Federal Aviation Administration. On July 8, 2005, Hernandez was the airman and sole occupant of a 1975 Cessna aircraft that landed at an airfield in Bullhead City, within the District of Arizona. On that date, Hernandez knowingly and willfully served as an airman or pilot and did so voluntarily and with the full knowledge that he was not authorized to do so as a result of his airman's certificate being revoked for life.

In addition to standard conditions of probation, Hernandez must submit to searches and was instructed not to operate an airplane nor reapply for an airman's certificate.

The investigation in this case was conducted by the Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Bullhead City Police Department and the Federal Aviation Administration. The prosecution was handled by Judson T. Mihok, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Tucson.

CASE NUMBER: CR-06-0143 TUC FRZ  
RELEASE NUMBER: 2007-111(Hernandez)

# # #